

SOLEC '96

Organizing Agencies

Environment Canada and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Description

The second State of the Lakes Ecosystem Conference was held in November 1996. The focus was on determining the state of the nearshore ecosystem and the human impacts on it. Five background papers were prepared for the conference:

- Neashore Waters of the Great Lakes;
- Coastal Wetlands of the Great Lakes;
- Land by the Lakes: Nearshore Terrestrial Ecosystems;
- Impacts of Changing Land Use; and
- Information and Information Management.

In addition, an integration paper was prepared, linking together many issues brought out in the background papers. After the conference the papers were finalized, incorporating comments made at SOLEC 96 and the State of the Great Lakes - 1997 report was produced.

Why the Nearshore?

SOLEC 94 looked at the Lakes in their entirety. SOLEC 96 focused more on nearshore areas - they are the most productive zones within each of the Lakes, and are the areas that are most impacted by human activity. The nearshore area is extremely important to overall ecosystem function.

The challenge of pulling together information on the nearshore zones was not trivial because:

- the nearshore is spatially far more variable than the open lakes;
- the nearshore is far more variable biologically; and
- information has not been routinely collected on nearshore spawning and nursery areas.

The conference examined the condition of the nearshore ecosystem in terms of the health of aquatic and terrestrial communities; and physical, chemical and biological habitat. It also examined the stressors that affect them, such as exotic species and human activities together with underlying socio-economic aspects.

In addition to nearshore ecosystem health and its stressors, the conference examined the state of knowledge of nearshore aquatic and terrestrial areas and the stressors that act upon them. This includes both the state of the information base and the identification of problems and causes.

Participants

Conference participants at SOLEC 96 included federal and provincial/state agencies, industry, academia and other non-government organizations from both Canada and the U.S. plus representation from municipal/local governments and agencies.

Geographic Scope of SOLEC 96

The entire Great Lakes basin with a specific interest on the nearshore areas.

Length of Conference and Location

Two and a half days (November 6-8, 1996), held in Windsor, Ontario.

Status of Conference

Completed.

Contact

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